

Pittsburgh is the first city to ever repeat. We also won it in 1985. They do it every 4 years. And I can't tell you how happy I am to have this designation because this shows for the rest of the country and the rest of the world what we already know in Southwestern Pennsylvania, that Pittsburgh is a great place to live and work. And Rand McNally has done this through formula. And 379 cities are rated on nine categories: housing, transportation, jobs, education, climate, crime, health care, recreation and ambiance, which covers its being a great place to live and work and things to do.

Pittsburgh was in the top 30 percent in the housing category. It is 93 percent of the national average in the cost of living with regard to housing. In transportation, Pittsburgh's commute is 25 minutes to work one way. And I challenge the rest of my colleagues in some other areas of the country to match that. I know that it is frustrating during rush hour to find your way into work, and in Pittsburgh generally on most days you can get in relatively quickly.

The average house in Pittsburgh is 49 percent below the national average in cost at \$112,000. So that is why we rank so high in housing. In jobs, Pittsburgh is in the top quarter there. For 100 years, it still is one of the Nation's top corporate centers as home to Fortune 500 companies: Alcoa, Heinz, Mellon, PNC, PPG, U.S. Steel, and WESCO International. We have more than 90 multi-billion dollar, global corporations that call the city of Pittsburgh home.

We have more than 2,000 acres of ready-to-go sites near our airport. We have the Nation's second busiest inland port with our three rivers and the waterways. And importantly, for the environmentally conscious, Pittsburgh has the most certified "green" buildings in the entire country.

In education, we are home to 34 colleges and universities, including Carnegie Mellon University, which always is ranked as one of the best in the entire Nation. We have four distinct seasons with 7 months that see sunshine 50 percent of the time. And I will admit that our winters can be tough, and that was probably not our strong suit, but we still were number one overall.

Pittsburgh in crime has the lowest crime rate of any of the top 25 cities in the entire country, and this is a consistent rating that Pittsburgh has finished strongly.

In health care, we are an international leader in medical research and innovation. We have a world class health care system. We are ranked 14th overall in the country and our children's hospital is ranked 11th in the entire country.

In recreation, we have five cities. We have three rivers that provide 38 miles of shoreline for recreational purposes such as fishing. And we have PNC Park for our baseball team, which has been rated consistently as the top baseball

park in the country. We have a new Penguins arena scheduled to be built and a great young hockey team. And we have a football team that has now won five Super Bowls. So we have a lot of sports and recreation to do.

And in the performing arts, we have more performing arts concentrated in one area than any city in the country outside of New York City. It has been voted the second best cityscape in America, the view from the top of Mt. Washington in Pittsburgh. We have whitewater rafting and downhill skiing within 90 minutes. And we have a bike passage that goes all the way from the city of Pittsburgh to right here in Washington, D.C.

So, again, the fact that we were number one in Rand McNally for the second time did not surprise me, and it did not surprise the rest of the people in western Pennsylvania. But it might have come as a surprise to some other people around the country.

And I stand here tonight to tell my colleagues and anyone else that may be viewing tonight that Pittsburgh is a fantastic place to live and work, especially for young people. And we are doing a much better job now attracting and retaining a younger workforce, and we have shown through a variety of ways that we have young and dynamic leadership.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SESTAK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SESTAK addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES of North Carolina addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SHAYS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HINCHEY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CUMMINGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE 30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Madam Speaker, I would like to welcome my colleagues to another addition of the 30-Something's hour. I would like to thank the Speaker of the House, NANCY PELOSI, for allowing us the opportunity to get together and talk not only about some of the most important issues that face this hall this week and at this moment but also talk a little bit about how these issues are of particular concern to people of younger generations in this country.

We are going to be joined today, I know, by Mr. ALTMIRE, who just gave a very compelling 5-minute address to the House and, hopefully very soon, by Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, one of our favorite members of the 30-Something Group.

Madam Speaker, hopefully we will get to touch on a few different topics, but I think we need to touch on at the beginning of this hour the subject that really dominates the debate in Washington, D.C., right now, that dominates

most of the discussion out in the coffeehouses and pancake breakfasts and pasta dinners happening across this land, and that is, what is happening in this town? What is happening in Washington, D.C., inside the beltway? And that is, why can't government figure out what everyone else has figured out across the country, that we need to set a new direction when it comes to this country's policy in Iraq.

Now, I am certainly starting to feel that frustration. People thought when they weighed in on the national elections in the beginning of November of last year that they were actually saying something; that when they stood up in record numbers in some parts of this country and made courageous decisions district by district to replace long-time incumbent Members this Congress with relatively new Members, such as myself, such as Mr. ALTMIRE and some 40-odd number of our friends on this side of the aisle that became new Members this January, they thought that it meant something. They thought that that voice that they spoke with in the beginning of November was going to be heard down here. And I can tell when I go back to my district, and I just came back this last weekend and I have been back every weekend since we have been down, that the patience of the American people is starting to wear thin. Now, it is not necessarily directed here. I think some people are still in some sort of sense of euphoria that we finally have a Congress that is listening to the American people again. Their anger is directed at the President of the United States. Their anger is directed at an administration that just doesn't seem to get it, that refuses every step of the way to step up to the plate and have some type of accountability for what is happening here, refuses to listen to the American people.

And the American people have spoken in the election, and they continue to speak today. A CNN poll that came out just a short while ago said a majority of Americans, 65 percent, oppose the Iraq war, and a full 54 percent disapprove of the President's decision to veto the Iraq accountability bill last week. Nearly six in ten Americans, in a recent Gallup poll, support setting a firm timetable for withdrawing U.S. troops out of Iraq; 61 percent of Americans, in another CNN poll, favor a bill that sets benchmarks that the Iraq government must meet to show progress that is being made in Iraq; 55 percent of Americans think it was the wrong thing for the United States to go to war in the first place. That is an amazing number, Madam Speaker; 55 percent of Americans, the majority of the Americans, now today believe that it was the wrong decision to go into Iraq in the first place.

Before the time of Mr. ALTMIRE and me, the 30-Something Democrats, Mr. RYAN and Mr. MEEK and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, liked to point out third-party verifiers. It is not just

our saying it. Things that we stand here and say have actually been said time and time again by people who know what they are talking about and the American people.

Here is third-party verification: The American people by large numbers support not only the actions of this Congress when it comes to setting firm benchmarks for the Iraqis to stand up for themselves but also to set firm timetables by which we would start to redeploy our troops. Now, the American people join a growing hegemony of opinion within our foreign policy community. There are very few times when Republicans and Democrats outside this hall decide to agree on a course forward on something as weighty as the foreign policy issues that confront us in the Middle East. But the Iraq Study Group, five Democrats, five Republicans, Mr. ALTMIRE, came together and told us, it is time to set a new course. It is time to start bringing our troops home, start redeploying them to fights that matter. Record numbers of retired generals.

Now, it has become kind of de rigueur to see on a daily basis retired generals from across America to come out and start to criticize the President's policy. This didn't happen before in these numbers. This is not the normal course of business for the men and women who have spent their lives fighting and leading American troops to then turn around after they have left their military service and criticize the very government that they have worked for, fought for and bled for all of those years. But that is what is happening today because the stakes are so high. The American public, bipartisan leaders on foreign policy issues and former military leaders are standing up and saying enough is enough.

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We need to set a new course.

Now, there seems to be a very powerful sound barrier that has been built around the White House. Because for as many voices, the multitudes of American people, the multitudes of foreign policy experts, of retired generals, many of which ended their careers on the ground in Iraq, for all of those people throwing the might of their collective voices at the White House, a deafening silence.

Madam Speaker, I got the chance to go over and visit our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan; and the first thing you're struck by is the unbelievable and unconditional bravery that they show this Nation. The capability of these forces is almost beyond explanation, and I got the chance to come back and talk to the President very briefly about it in a visit to the White House.

Those troops know that the situation on the ground has changed dramatically, that the fight that began as a battle against the autocrat that was Saddam Hussein now has become a civil war. The troops know it because they're right in the middle of it.

We asked our military leaders, how much of the fire that is being directed at American troops is the result of insurgent forces and al Qaeda forces firing at Americans and how much of it is simply a sectarian war that we find ourselves in the middle of? And the answer was the same no matter who you asked. Ninety percent of the fire directed at American forces are Sunni and Shia fighting each other, sometimes Shia and Shia fighting each other, that we are caught in the middle of.

This President, for some reason, refuses to understand how things have changed on the ground in Iraq and how things have changed when it comes to the opinion of foreign policy leaders, military leaders and the American public.

I think many of us were very proud to stand together, certainly the freshman class and as a caucus, to support our leadership's position to set a new course; and we were dismayed to see a President who is unwilling to work with this Congress. We will take another shot at that this week by presenting the President with another alternative on his desk once again to set that new direction. And from what we hear today, it will be met with the same resounding deafening silence and indifference to the will of the American people.

I am so glad to be joined here by one of my great freshman colleagues, Mr. ALTMIRE from Pennsylvania, who I think shares with me, as new Members, as two young guys who have only spent about 4 or 5 months down here, that sort of growing sense of frustration when we go back to our districts and we hear people who wanted that change feeling like they're not getting it here because there is an administration that simply won't join that growing unanimity of opinion to set a new course.

I would like to yield to my friend from Pennsylvania.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I appreciate the gentleman from Connecticut, and I admire his leadership. I know that you did make that trip to Iraq and you came back and you can speak with some authority and some expertise, and I appreciate hearing from you. And I especially appreciate the opportunity to speak tonight on what is definitely the most important issue I think everyone would agree that we face.

I was struck by the fact that the gentleman mentioned third-party verification for different options and different opinions in Iraq. And what strikes me is the fact that the President of the United States has declined to listen to any third-party verification. He has delivered a loud and clear message last November that the American people called for change, not only domestically here in America but especially in Iraq. He has been told by his generals on the ground that he is not moving in the correct direction. He has been told by his advisers, before they're replaced, that he's not going in

the right way. The Iraq Study Group, as we all know, recommended the course of action that we have advocated; and the bill that he vetoed was verified by the Iraq Study Group.

The fact that he fails to listen to the American people, he fails to listen to his military advisers, he fails to listen to his White House advisers and he fails to listen to the Iraq Study Group, that demonstrates a clear decision on his part that he is going to ignore all of those opinions and continue down the same failed course.

I was dismayed today when I heard the news that 35,000 American troops have been told that they can expect to be sent to Iraq this fall and that their tour is going to last at least through the spring of 2008. Now, this is additional troops after the surge that we had been told in January was only going to last a few months and only going to be 21,000 troops. Now we're hearing an additional 35,000 troops and the surge is going to be at least 18 months instead of the 2 or 3 or 4 months that were we were initially led to believe.

But, thankfully, this Congress took clear and decisive action by sending the President a bill, which we have talked about before, that gives the troops the money that they need. It actually contains more money in funding for our troops on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan than the President requested, and that bill was met with a veto, as we know.

I had someone come up to me over the weekend and say, well, when are you going to get our troops the money that they need? And I said, we sent the President a bill that does exactly that. It was the President's decision to veto that bill and delay this process and, most importantly, delay the funding for our troops.

So the fact that he now came out and made a statement today that if we sent him a bill, that is, we took out all the things that he talked about that he doesn't like, it is not going to have the timelines and the things that he used as his reason for vetoing it the first time, we are going to send him a bill that gives the troops the funding that they need to get them through the next several months, and it is actually going to again be more funding than he asked for for the period of time that we are going to send him the money for, and we were told today that is going to be met with a veto.

So I am exasperated to hear this, because I want the troops to get the money and the funding and all the equipment and resources that they need to continue the brave fight that Mr. MURPHY from Connecticut was talking about and that he witnessed firsthand. But we can't do that alone. We need the President to sign the bill that we sent him.

Tomorrow, we are going to vote on our second bill after the veto; and we are going to send it to the White House. I hope that the President will

reconsider his decision to delay the funding that our troops in the field need, because these are the bravest and brightest Americans. These are people who are putting their lives on the line. They are giving every sacrifice. They are leaving their families back home for extended periods of time, multiple tours. And we are giving them the money that is required, but the President is delaying the process. So I share the frustrations of the gentleman from Connecticut.

At this time, I will yield to the gentlewoman from Florida, our fearless leader with the 30-Something Working Group, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you so much, Mr. ALTMIRE.

I have to tell you what a pleasure it is to have the reinforcements in you and Mr. MURPHY and a number of other Members, you, Madam Speaker, to have been elected on November 7 to bolster the efforts of the 30-Something Working Group. Because we hung in there for the last couple of cycles and took to the floor every night to talk to the American people and to our colleagues on this floor about the issues that we believed were important to them that were not being addressed by our colleagues and good friends on the other side of the aisle when they were in charge.

I want to follow up on what you and Mr. MURPHY have just been discussing relating to the President and his attitude. The conclusion that I have reached is that it must be that the President has contempt for the democratic process. I can't really reach any other conclusion besides that.

Because we are not a monarchy. He hopefully realizes that he was not elected king. He is not self-appointed. He is one of three branches of government that are coequal, coequal meaning we have as much say and as much right to weigh in on something as significant as whether to, A, commit our troops to war, and, B, we control the appropriations, we control the purse.

And what we believe, as Democrats, is that it is irresponsible for us to give this President a blank check and an open-ended commitment to the Iraqi government with absolutely no accountability and no requirement that there be progress forward or benchmarks met. I mean, the President must believe that we aren't listening to our constituents, or maybe he's not listening. He says he is listening. In fact, on April 24 of this year the President said this, "Last November, the American people said they were frustrated and wanted change in our strategy in Iraq. I listened."

Really? I have yet to see any evidence of him listening. What I have seen evidence of, and, you know, I know that I often go back to the analogy of my interaction with my own children when talking about this President, but my frustration and observation about the insolence on occasion of my own children is similar to what we

have been observing from the reaction from this White House.

I really can analogize it that when I am talking to, for us as the Democratic majority in Congress, we sent him legislation in the supplemental appropriations bill that he vetoed. And I have the privilege of serving on the Appropriations Committee and served on the conference committee. We sent him the legislation with a timeline for withdrawal, with his own benchmarks as he outlined on January 10, with accountability and with protection for our troops, A, ensuring that they not have a tour of duty without a 365-day separation in between those tours, the Army's own rules. We made sure that there was \$1.7 billion in funding for veterans' health care. We made sure that there was \$1.7 billion in there for military health care, something that you have been incredibly concerned about, veteran and military health care, Mr. ALTMIRE. And on and on. The issues that were, according to the President, very important to him and clearly important to the American people.

And so he vetoed that and said that there were other concerns that he had, that he didn't want his hands tied, that he wanted to have the flexibility, that he just wanted a blank check and open-ended commitment. We, being a coequal branch of government, have gone back to the drawing board. And the Democratic majority believing in compromise and a need to negotiate in good faith, we have now put forward another proposal, a proposal that is designed to address the concerns that he outlines.

And normally when you're going through a good-faith negotiation there is what's called "back and forth," for example, the analogy that I began a minute ago, when my children don't like what I'm telling them, when I'm talking to my kids and I explain to them that I want them to do A and they don't want to do A, and we kind of go back and forth. And being a parent of small children, sometimes it's a dictatorship, but sometimes there's negotiation. And it always works better when you can work things out with your kids and teach them that compromise is going to get you further. But when they don't like that compromise, my kids, just like all kids, stamp their foot and whine a little bit and tell me that they don't want to do that.

That really feels like how this President has reacted to Congress' clear ability to weigh in on the direction that this war should be taking. The American people certainly have weighed in. And what I don't understand is why the President isn't willing to come to the table and negotiate in good faith. The my-way-or-the-highway attitude that he has taken is irresponsible.

What we are doing in this next proposal is we are making sure that we fully fund over the next 3 months the

funding that the troops need. We provide the President and the Army with the funding that they need, but we tie it to benchmarks, we tie it to progress. The Iraqi government cannot believe that we will be there forever.

And then we have a second vote where we would come back; and if the President can certify to us that those benchmarks are being met, then the rest of the funding would be released. If he can't certify that to us, then the funding that we would appropriate would be used to go through a redeployment process.

Because at some point the madness has to end. That is what the American people have told us when we've gone home to our districts in town halls, in e-mails, in phone calls. The President appears to have ear plugs in his ears, and it's wrong. And that's why the Founding Fathers established coequal branches of government, so that one person in the executive office, in the Oval Office could not unilaterally decide to commit our troops, to keep them there and to engage us in military action indefinitely. It's irresponsible.

Mr. MURPHY.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Thank you, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

Your question is a perfect one: When will this madness end? When will we recognize that we need to set a new course, that we need to start paying attention to not just what's happening within the borders of Iraq but what's happening in Afghanistan, what's happening on our own shores, where we still haven't appropriated the amount of money to devote to the resources that we should in order to secure our own borders and our own ports?

And here is what it comes down to: If the Democrats weren't in control, the madness would never end; it would go on forever. There is absolutely no commitment, no willingness, no one on the other side of the aisle, very few at least on the other side of the aisle and certainly very few in the administration have woken up to the new reality here.

And to me, I won't say who it was, but a member of the Republican leadership the other day was quoted in the paper as saying this. This person said, you know what? The President, we are going to give him some time to put forth this plan to escalate the war in and around Baghdad.

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But if it doesn't work, he is going to have to tell us what plan B is. Guess what. We are not on plan B we are on plan like double R. We have tried everything. We have been in there for longer than we were involved in World War II, and we still haven't found out what works.

Well, at some point, we are going to have to wake up to the notion that nothing that our military may try is going to work.

Now, if anyone can do this job, I think our military can do it. The prob-

lem is that we have gotten ourselves into a political quagmire, and the sooner we realize that plan A and plan B and plan C and D and E and F all didn't work, in large part because we have gotten ourselves into a mess that has probably, we hope, a political and diplomatic solution but may not have a military solution.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, I just want to talk for a minute, I know we really want to talk about some domestic issues here, but I want to talk about some of the stress we have put on our forces here at home. Because I have to tell you, as we watched some of the tragedies unfold in the Midwest, in Kansas, and we saw the inability of our National Guard in that State to respond, unfortunately, it took that incident for a lot of people to finally wake up to the notion that our Reserve units and our National Guard units, the very troops that we relied on for years, decades, to provide us with security when tragedy befell our compatriots here at home, aren't there any longer. We heard it from Governors in Iowa, Minnesota and, of course, now in Kansas.

The administration, as usual, seems to be more interested in throwing around blame than they seem to be interested in actually solving the problem. When the Governor of Kansas came out and said, listen, here you see it; we don't have the resources to respond to this devastating crisis because our National Guard units have been deployed over and over again overseas in a way that we never asked our National Guard and Reserve units to be deployed in the past, the White House came back and said, well, you know what? That is not our fault. That is the Governor's fault for not telling us that she had problems. If she had just told us she had problems, we would have done something about it.

Well, guess what? She did. Last year, quoted in the New York Times, the Governor of Kansas said, we are not only missing National Guard personnel, we are also missing a lot of the equipment that is used to deal with situations at home, day in and day out.

Well, you know, we have heard a lot about how folks in the White House don't read newspapers with the rigor that some of us do. They certainly did not read The New York Times that day when the Governor of Kansas almost a year ago sounded the bell and said, if we don't start replenishing our units here at home, we are going to be in big trouble. And we are.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I am really glad that you touched on that, because you read my mind. I am obviously from a State where the National Guard and its readiness is imperative. We are approaching June 1st, which is the beginning of hurricane season. It runs all the way through to the end of November. I know from conversations that I have had with our Guard leadership in Florida that a good amount of our equipment is over in Iraq still. And to make matters worse is that the

equipment that has come back is in such horrendous shape that it is almost unusable.

When I had a meeting in my district office with the head of our National Guard, with the commander, this was over a year ago, he expressed that concern to me over a year ago. We can't deal with the lack of readiness in Kansas but certainly not in a State like Florida where we are in the middle of hurricane alley. And we have already had the first main storm today, three weeks before the hurricane season even begins.

So we are not just talking about the foreign policy impact, the perception of our Nation across the world or the impact on our troops. There is a domestic impact, a significant detrimental domestic impact to our inability to address where we are in this war and when it is going to end.

We have got to make sure that the Iraqi government and the Iraqi troops are in a position to stand on their own so that we can bring our troops home and deal with the domestic needs that we have in this country.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, I think the gentlelady has touched on that issue in a way that makes sense to most onlookers. She comes from a State that has seen problems. But we saw as a nation what happened in New Orleans in 2005 and the lack of response that took place in large part because of these issues that we are talking about, because the Guard and the Reserve that would usually be called upon to address those issues and come to the aid of the victims of that hurricane were deployed or otherwise engaged.

We have a National Guard and Reserve that has been the subject of multiple deployments now, often three, four deployments. And when we have a situation like unfortunately happened in Kansas recently, we see the result. The Guard and Reserve is over deployed, and we are not able to respond in the fashion we need to respond when we have a national emergency, such as we saw in Kansas.

I wanted, if it is okay with the gentleman from Connecticut, to switch the topic to gas prices, because I realized as I was looking at the gentlewoman from Florida, there may be some viewers who are wondering what that apparatus is that is next to her. It is a gas pump. I will let her talk about that momentarily.

But I just wanted to start the ball rolling on that discussion and read you a quote from the President of the United States from July of 2001. So we are going back 6 years now. This is what the President said: "My administration has proposed a plan that will reduce America's reliance on foreign oil." Six years ago.

For those who are interested in the success or lack thereof of that statement: In 2002, this Nation got 58 percent of its oil from foreign sources. That was our dependence. In the year 2006, last year, that number had risen to 66 percent.

Here you have a President who says that it is one of his priorities to reduce our dependence on foreign oil. We went from 58 percent in his first full year in office to 66 percent last year, and it is exponential growth, just a chart that goes straight up. So I would say that his philosophy has not worked as well as perhaps he would have hoped.

What is most disappointing to me is I sat here for my first State of the Union address as a Member of Congress, and I listened to the President go on for quite some time about energy independence and the need to reduce our dependence and reliance on foreign oil. I was encouraged by that. This was still my first month in office, and I thought, this is a President that has finally seen the light and was going to move in that direction.

But, unfortunately, I went back and I reread some of his previous State of the Union addresses, and I realized that he has made that claim multiple times over the years of his administration. And instead of seeing a diminishment of our reliance on foreign oil source, it is growing exponentially.

So it is frustrating to me to see the lack of attention to what is the first issue domestically that I hear about when I go back to my district, and I am sure the gentlelady from Florida and the gentleman from Connecticut have the same questions bestowed upon them when they go back to their districts, why are gas prices so high, and what are you doing about it?

Well, this Congress is taking steps to do something about it. After years of coddling the big oil companies and giving them taxpayer subsidies in the billions of dollars at a time when they are making all-time record profits for any industry in the history of the country, we have finally decided we are going to pull back on those subsidies and redirect them to alternative sources of energy, to research and development of a myriad of sources of energy, to get us off of our dependence on foreign oil, something the President said was his priority 6 years ago, but nothing was done about it.

So this Congress is going to use that money for research and development to grow us out of this problem through research and development.

I yield back to the gentleman from Connecticut, who has a chart that illustrates what has happened to gas prices since this President first took office.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, let me set the stage to kick it over to Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

Here it is. The President took office January 22, 2001, \$1.47; \$1.47, that is like sort of a mystical number now. I can't even fathom when we were paying \$1.47 for gas. Today, the average price for a gallon in the United States, \$3.05.

Now, I am going to admit that in my part of the world, in northwestern Connecticut, probably like everybody's district, we have a couple of conspiracy theorists up there. We have a couple of people that are not actually willing to believe that the best of intentions are

always at the root of decisions made in our political and economic system.

I have to tell you, the cynic in me and the conspiracy theorist in me, and there is a little bit of it, wonders a little bit why gas prices dipped down, curiously, right about the time when we were all up for election and reelection. Just when there was this sort of wave of economic discontent swinging across the country and all of the people were talking about finally taking our economy back from the oil companies. Just as this country was poised to make a decision to finally end, as Mr. ALTMIRE said, our firm decades-long dependence on oil and foreign oil in large part, why did gas prices just dip right then? And then as soon as January, February came around, creeping up and up, a little bit more and a little bit more. Now as we head into the summer, into the prime driving months of the year, we are at \$3.05 a gallon.

Now, I am not willing to say that is just politics, but the cynic in me has to wonder sometimes whether or not our gas and oil companies were just hoping, hoping that they could stem the tide and that they wouldn't have a Democratic majority here who would make a difference.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I don't mean to interrupt the gentleman, but I did want to remind anyone who is observing this discussion tonight that the "Six for '06" was the Democratic mantra moving forward and going into the election. Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ was here for that discussion, and Mr. MURPHY and I were out on the campaign trail. And we talked a lot about gas prices and taking on big oil for the first time in many years and revoking some of these subsidies and redirecting them. That was a key staple of this six policy issues that the Democrats made as their top priority for that election cycle and for the first 100 hours in Congress after we were able to retake the Congress.

The gentleman talks about the sequence of events that, as that discussion was brought out, it became pretty clear to everybody that this was going to be a change. This was going to be a new direction for the country.

Again, I am just saying that, as the gentleman is, it is an amazing coincidence that just as that proposal comes forward and just as the momentum starts to shift and look like the Democrats have a chance to promote this agenda in the majority for the first time in 12 years, we do see an incredible drop in gas prices. I think it went down something like 80 cents over a several week period leading up to the election. Now, as you said, it is back up to record levels here shortly thereafter.

I did not mean to interrupt.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. I would like to think that miracles do happen when it comes to energy policy, but unfortunately, I think that may be a little naive.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you, Mr. MURPHY.

You know, I really became enraged this weekend because you both have

heard me refer to myself as what I am, and that is a "minivan mom." I am a minivan mom, one of the millions of minivan moms that drive around my district with the kids in the back seat. And I can tell you that we, ideally, if you are a mom with little kids, would drive a smaller vehicle so that you could save gas, so that you could save money, so that you could be more energy efficient and environmentally conscious.

However, when you are traveling from soccer to baseball to dance class to school and all the things that minivan moms have to do, you need a vehicle the size of a minivan. And they are expensive to fill up. Believe me.

This weekend, we were back up, just for 87 octane, when I filled my gas tank, 87 octane in my hometown of Weston was \$3.06 a gallon. The 93 octane was about \$3.88. I stood there, and it had been a while since we felt the rage and actually a while since I have gotten feedback from constituents about their frustration, because, like you said, I am actually an idealist. I am not a cynic. I am not someone that believes in conspiracy theories.

There is just no question in my mind that that drop in gas prices was absolutely tied to the potential fortunes of the Republican candidates for Congress and this administration. So I am just going to say it straight out.

The only explanation other than that and the only explanation for the insensitivity on the part of the President and this White House must be that they are not filling their own tanks. Maybe their drivers are doing it for them.

I would like to take the opportunity to introduce our colleagues and the President to a gas tank. This is what they look like. And when you insert the pump into your vehicle, the indicator on the gas pump shows you how much you are paying and shows you the total at the end after you are done filling your tank.

□ 2100

They are not filling their own tank. That must be the only explanation why the President hasn't taken any steps to address our dependence on foreign oil, to deal with the record profits, obscene profits that the oil industry is making.

I don't understand how he could look himself in the mirror after the 2006 State of the Union which I was here for and you guys were running to join us here. I heard President Bush stand at that lectern and tell us that we must end America's addiction to foreign oil. It clearly was just words. That is what they are good at. They are good at the words. They just are not good at backing up the words with action. But we are. Here we are talking about what we need to do. I want us to share with our colleagues and other folks that might be listening what our plans are, because we are going to take some action.

We represent the folks that drive minivans around their district and drive pickup trucks and who run small businesses who need to make sure that gas prices don't cut their legs out from under their business and prevent them from being able to function. That is the reality on the ground every day.

Your gas prices go up, you have a harder time choosing to provide your employees with health insurance, you have a harder time being able to buy that piece of equipment your business needs. There is a direct result on small businesses from gas prices going up.

We are taking several significant steps. The Speaker has created a Select Committee on Global Warming and Energy Independence. That was a controversial move but something that she felt was important because it is so critical that we address the issue of global warming and energy independence that we needed to highlight it and put it up on a pedestal and get Members to travel the world and talk about how we can move the ball down the field and address this issue.

In addition to the hearings and oversight that select committee will be doing, and that select committee will meet for a year time period because there needs to be action taken within a very short time span so we can get some results for the American people.

Also, in the Energy and Commerce Committee, we will be hearing Mr. STUPAK's legislation called the Energy Price Gouging Prevention Act to immediately provide relief to consumers and prevent the oil companies from price gouging like what is clearly going on here. I mean, we cannot allow the oil industry to put our constituents on the roller coaster ride that they are clearly on right now.

We have to do a number of things. We have to set an example in this institution. Speaker PELOSI has moved forward with the Greening the Capitol Initiative. I am privileged to chair the subcommittee which will be working on a lot of the initiatives for the Greening the Capitol project.

What we will be doing is within the next 2 years, by the end of the 110th Congress, we will establish policies that will make our Capitol complex carbon neutral; and we will make sure that we set an example for businesses across the country. We have to take several major steps to provide relief and balance and focus on alternative energy research so we can truly wean ourselves off dependence from foreign oil and not just talk about it.

I am a little hot about that. I see the Speaker is standing on her feet, which means we are probably getting close to the end of our time.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. On the heels of introducing some of our colleagues and members of the administration to a gas pump, and I think you are right, it is hard to understand how people can be so indifferent to the rising costs. Maybe they haven't seen a gas pump. I want to introduce them to something else.

This is a wallet. If you are an oil company executive, your wallet is busting at the seams. So your wallet is going to look different. This is a thin wallet. This is what the American people, working-class individuals throughout this country are dealing with. They are dealing with wages that have been pretty much flat for the last 5 years.

Oil company profits over the last 5 years have gone from \$6.5 billion in 2002 to \$30.2 billion in 2007. I want to make sure that while we are introducing some of our colleagues and some people in the administration to a gas pump, let's also introduce them to the thin wallet. If the average worker's income doubled from 2001 to 2007, I would say no problem, you can handle gas prices that doubled over that time. But the fact is that wages for average Americans have remained flat. Why? Because we have set up an economy that is designed to fail for regular, working-class individuals in this country, the folks that we represent, the people working in small businesses, who are living from paycheck to paycheck and can't take these increases at the pump.

As much as we have to introduce people to the notion that we have to start redirecting our energy policy, we also have to reintroduce people to the fact that there are millions of Americans out there playing by the rules who simply don't have the means to deal with these increased prices.

Mr. ALTMIRE. The gentlewoman from Florida listed off a number of initiatives that this Democratic Congress has taken at long last to address the gas price crisis that we are facing in this country. We are going to move with great speed to address these issues. We are going to address the price-gouging situation. We are going to address alternative sources of energy. We are going to address the environmental impact of the choices and the long-term consequences. We will address the price of gas that we see at pumps every day, similar to the one that the gentlewoman was holding up.

But I want to remind everybody, which is obvious because we are having this Iraq debate now and the President has sent one bill back with a veto and may send a second bill back with a veto, that we, because of the Constitution, can't do it ourselves. This is a divided government that we have, and we need the assistance of the people on the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue down at the White House to join us in this effort to make a national priority of lowering the gas prices and addressing this issue for the first time since this President took office.

I don't see any indication that he is willing to do that. We can pass legislation, we can have committee hearings and oversight and talk all that we want, but if we are not joined in this effort by our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, and especially the President, we are going to be unable to address this issue in a way that is satisfactory to the American people.

I would urge my colleagues to voice their opinion that this is a priority. It is important to their constituents, and we do need to have a bipartisan effort moving forward to do this because this is an important issue. These are big topics that we are trying to pursue, and we need a unified American people and a unified body to take the initiative to the President and hopefully work with him on a positive solution.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I think what is important for us to emphasize in the 30-Something Working Group here is we are about action. Our Democratic leadership under Speaker PELOSI and Majority Leader HOYER and Mr. CLYBURN, our whip, and Mr. EMANUEL, our caucus Chair, we spend a lot of time on this floor. The people who are watching see us doing a lot of talking. I mean, talk is nice, but I want us to make sure that we are getting across what we are going to be doing about this problem.

The Speaker has made a commitment that has directed the committees that are chaired by Democratic Members that, by July 4, that we will expand and extend renewable energy and energy efficiency initiatives, that we will make efforts to make our Nation's farmers leaders in reducing our independence on foreign oil by promoting clean, domestically produced alternative fuels.

They do that in Brazil. Brazil has become completely independent of foreign oil. In fact, our own auto industry, our American automobile industry manufactures vehicles to be driven in Brazil because they use an ethanol-based gasoline so they can be self-sufficient. It is entirely doable.

We need to refocus, and our policies and committee hearings and legislation that will be moving through by Independence Day will move us in the direction of changing our dependence from the Middle East to the Midwest in our country.

We will also provide incentives for an energy-innovation economy that will create new jobs and efficiency measures to help consumers and small businesses reduce energy costs. And we are going to make sure that we strengthen our national commitment to energy research and development for the next generation of high-risk, high-reward energy technology.

We have an innovation agenda that was part of the New Direction for America agenda that we ran on and talked about in race after race in district after district. People want to know that it is not just words, that it is not just lips flapping up here. We are going to actually move legislation and use our congressional oversight capability and leadership on this issue so they don't hear one more quarter go by where they see record profits from the oil industry, one more quarter go by where they are on a roller coaster ride for gas prices.

We need to make sure that we help our colleagues on the other side of the

aisle and the President of this country knows what a gas tank is. Because Mr. ALTMIRE did make reference that this is a gas tank, but this is a pretty ancient gas tank. This is a representation of a gas tank that probably dates back to the 1950s. Perhaps that is the last time that our colleagues on the other side of the aisle or the President actually used one of these. That really is, I think, the only explanation for their insensitivity.

It is our job to make sure that we move this innovation agenda forward so we can make it a priority. That is why rolling back those subsidies were part of our 6 in '06 agenda.

One of the first bills that we passed in the first 100 hours in the majority was a repeal of the subsidies that were given away to the oil industry that they literally said they did not need. How could they need them? They are sitting on piles of money, billions of dollars, and we gave them subsidies. We gave them back money that they owed us, that were royalties that we should have earned because we give them the right to drill on government-owned land.

It is just unbelievable that the priorities of the administration would be closer to the oil industry than it would be to the people. It is immoral. It really is. It is nothing short of immoral.

We have to start thinking about how the decisions we make here impact real people. We stand in this Chamber every day. And you know what happens? I was in the legislature in Florida. My district is 450 miles from the capitol in Tallahassee, and it is a lot further from Washington. It becomes really easy, I think, for a lot of the Members to forget the impact of the decisions that we make in this room on real people. You can easily become desensitized. Maybe that is what it is.

I know the President goes around the country and talks to people. But the way they set those events up for the President, as I understand it, he is isolated. They screen a lot of the people that get an opportunity to be in the room with him, if not all of them. I just don't think he hears from enough people about the true impact of his policies. It is the only explanation.

If he was really hearing what people were saying and if he was really sympathetic to the plight of people who are struggling, and not just poor people, but we are talking about middle-class people who have a job and who are, like you said, living paycheck to paycheck, and even people not living paycheck to paycheck.

Just because you can afford to pay \$55 to fill up your gas tank doesn't mean it is okay. It shouldn't cost that much. It doesn't have to, and we need to make sure that our actions become reality and that we put pressure on the President to sign what we send him when we send it by Independence Day.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. I always think there is this pyramid of political influence out there. For a very

long time, the only people that really mattered in this system were the people gathered at the tip of the pyramid, the people with the big political action committees and who could afford to hire 10 lobbyists to patrol the halls of Congress. And all of us, you know, that exist down at the bottom of that pyramid, and when we come here we get to be closer to the top than the bottom, but the regular folks who sit wondering, and even if they don't wonder if they can afford to fill their tank, they wonder whether increasing gas prices means they can save less, whether this will have some impact on their retirement savings. All of those folks that exist at the base of that pyramid didn't matter any longer.

As much as for me and Mr. ALTMIRE, as much as we care about setting a different course in Iraq and taking on the hegemony of the oil companies and setting a new course for health care policy, I think for us this election was as much about sort of flipping that pyramid on its head and saying we have got to start taking the time to form consensus back at the base of that pyramid and having those decisions be the ones that matter here in Washington.

I have to tell you, standing here as a member of the 30-Something Working Group, nobody knows more than we do about how many Americans now stand on a precipice of jumping off a cliff to having faith in their government. Young people, whether in their 20s or 30s, but people now in their 40s, 50s and 60s have just lost any faith that what they care about will actually be reflected in what happens in Washington.

□ 2115

Guess what, in January, when a new Congress got sworn in, it all changed. Now, it may not change so much that things happen here with the alacrity that people may like. This government is still designed not exactly to respond overnight, but you would not be seeing the policy proposals that you are outlining, whether it is taking on the royalties and the tax breaks, whether it is taking a look at antitrust provisions, whether it is passing a strong price-gouging bill. You just would not see that.

You would hear a lot of bluster, but you would not be seeing action if we did not flip government on its head in January and start once again listening to people out in communities rather than just listening to the conversations that happen perpetually within the halls of government. All those conversations are focused on one thing, the status quo.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Just what all this boils down to for me is just one word, and that is insensitivity. I mean, there is a disconnect, which is almost a word that has almost become cliché, but a disconnect between what is really going on in the lives of the average American person and the policies that the White House and the President advance.

And that insensitivity, it is not isolated just to the price of oil. It is not isolated just to the President's believing that he is the only one that is right, and he was elected to be the decision-maker, as he said, and to heck with anyone else's opinion. The insensitivity is reflective, and it permeates every decision they make.

Let me just give you an example. I sit on the House Judiciary Committee as well, and tomorrow we have Attorney General Gonzales coming in front of our committee for our regular oversight of the Department of Justice. So the insensitivity and the tone deafness extends to even an issue like that.

The White House has defended their firings of the U.S. attorneys, essentially saying they had the right to do it, and they told us whatever reasons that they decided to release those U.S. attorneys, but they got caught in a fabrication. They got caught in a whole series of different stories that have come back to bite them.

Now we have a situation where we have an Attorney General who has completely undermined our ability and the American people's ability to have any confidence and trust in what he says. That is a pattern that exists. I mean, we talked during the campaign and during the 109th and the 108th about the culture of corruption. I mean, that is what has been hanging over this Capitol, which finally we have been able to lift it.

There are still remnants of it. We still have, sadly, a number of even our colleagues who have been accused of things and are going through investigations, but the Department of Justice and the Attorney General could have handled this U.S. attorney issue in a very simple way, a way that I do not think I could have or you could have questioned.

They had the right to decide to change who was sitting in those offices, who was serving as a U.S. attorney, and all they had to say was, we wanted to change the leadership in those eight offices. Instead, they got so caught up in telling a story that they thought was legitimate enough, that now it is not the firings, it is the coverup that is the problem. And that is what the White House does not seem to get.

We are almost talking apples and oranges. They are defending their right to have fired them. We are not disagreeing with them over their right to have fired the U.S. attorneys. We do have a serious problem, and we should have a serious problem not being able to trust that the information the administration and the Department of Justice provides to us when we ask them questions is accurate and that it is factual.

It is the trust and the violation of that trust that has been undermined for so long, and that was another result on November 7. Part of the result of the election is that the American people's confidence in their government was so badly undermined that they

wanted us to help them move in a new direction.

So it is just not isolated just to the issues we have been talking about tonight. We could go through a laundry list.

Mr. ALTMIRE. We only have about a minute and a half left, and Mr. MURPHY is going to do the wrap-up.

I just wanted to say that I see this prop that we have here, and it reminds me of, Mr. MURPHY and I were watching you and Mr. MEEK and Mr. RYAN last year with that big oil rubber stamp that you kept bringing around. Thankfully, we were able to retire that rubber stamp because the American people voted for a change in direction. I hope it is not going to take 18 months for us to retire that prop, that we are going to take clear and decisive action here in Congress, as I know we will under the Speaker's leadership, and we are going to be able to do something about the gas prices in a way that is going to allow us to retire your prop there. But we are going to do our part, and I am going to send it over now to Mr. MURPHY.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Speaking of props, I think by displaying that rather thin wallet before, I inadvertently started to make a case for an increase in congressional pay, for staff members here.

So, we are on honored to be able to have this opportunity that the Speaker has given us, Mr. ALTMIRE and I, certainly to be able to join our colleagues who have been up here for the last few years beating the drum.

You can e-mail us at 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov or you can visit us on the web at www.speaker.gov/30something. We hope that people will share their thoughts with us.

DUST AND TOXINS FROM 9/11

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. SUTTON). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Madam Speaker, today on the House floor, we passed a very important bill to reauthorize the Department of Homeland Security. Tonight, we must take time to remember the horrific event that made our Nation realize that we needed a Department of Homeland Security to begin with, the attacks of September 11, 2001.

We will never forget that fateful day and the thousands of people who lost their lives, and now we know that thousands more lost their health.

We must not forget the firefighters, police officers, EMTs and other first responders who bravely rushed to save the lives of others, even as everyone else was running in the opposite direction.

Within hours of the collapse of the World Trade Center, those first responders labored alongside hard hats

and average New Yorkers without regard for their own health or safety. They spent countless hours working the pit, sifting through the rubble, hoping against hope that they would be able to rescue someone trapped deep below.

Unfortunately, as the days went on and the mission turned from a rescue-and-recovery mission to a cleanup site, these brave men and women stayed. While they labored, most were not given the proper respiratory equipment, and all were given inaccurate information about the quality of the air they were breathing. They were told that the "air was safe to breathe." They were told that it was not a health hazard to be there.

Let us take a closer look: This air, the air enveloped by this massive toxic dust cloud, they said was safe to breathe. Unfortunately, we now know better. We know more about what was in that cloud, a poisonous cocktail of thousands of tons of coarse and fine particulate matter, pulverized cement and glass and other toxic pollutants.

To the mix were added 24,000 gallons of burning jet fuel and plastics, which created a dense plume of black smoke containing cancer-causing volatile organic compounds, dioxins and hydrocarbons, a specific combination of toxins probably never seen before and hopefully that we will never see again.

And all of this went into the mouths, throats and lungs of tens of thousands of workers while they tirelessly worked long shifts, not thinking first of their health but of serving this great Nation.

Later in this hour, I am going to share with you the stories of the individual brave men and women who worked at ground zero, but now let me just share one about the dust.

This is a story from Denise Belingham of Long Island, New York. In her own words, as reported in the New York Daily News, she said, "The air was indescribable," as you can see. "You couldn't eat anything that wasn't covered with dust. We had paper masks, but they were no good. Condensation from breathing turned the mask into mud. It was worse to breathe with it on. We got respirators about a week into it, but they were not fit-tested. They just came in boxes, and we grabbed one that might fit.

"I worked more than 300 hours at ground zero. I considered it a thank you to America, a chance to do something for my country and for my fellow New Yorkers and for my co-workers who were buried in the rubble.

"We never expected anything to go wrong. Every day we were told the air was safe to breathe. Working down there as a team gave us healing. We could feel all the angels, all the people who had died there."

Again, that was one of the personal accounts of work at ground zero, as reported in the Pulitzer Prize-winning Daily News series on the Forgotten Heroes of 9/11.

Now, well over 5 years after 9/11, we are seeing the potentially deadly ef-

fects on the thousands who worked around ground zero. This is in addition to the untold numbers of residents, area office workers and school children also exposed to the toxins of ground zero but have never received any medical monitoring or assistance from the Federal Government.

We have numerous peer-reviewed, scientific studies linking people's sicknesses to the toxins of ground zero.

Last year we learned from Mount Sinai, an important hospital in my district, and the World Trade Center Medical Monitoring Program that 70 percent of 9/11 responders suffered respiratory problems and 60 percent are still sick as a direct result of their work at ground zero. Making matters worse, nearly 40 percent of those screened have no health insurance, and for those who do have insurance, work-related illnesses are most often not covered.

We also learned from the fire department that the average New York City firefighter has lost 12 years of lung capacity following their service at ground zero, and many have been forced to retire or be reassigned due to their 9/11 illnesses.

And just 2 days ago, a new report from the fire department and Einstein College of Medicine in New York clearly linked World Trade Center dust to a rare type of lung-scarring disease, sarcoidosis, which involves an inflammation that produces tiny lumps of cells in the lungs. In some cases, the illness gets progressively worse and can be fatal.

Let there be no doubt. We now have scientific proof that the 9/11 health crisis is real, and that it is truly a matter of life and death.

□ 2130

Tonight I want everyone listening to understand this. The 9/11 health crisis is not only a New York City problem. The attacks on 9/11 were attacks against our Nation, not just New York. The whole country was touched; and, in the aftermath, people from every State in the Nation were exposed to these toxins while they assisted in the massive rescue recovery and cleanup efforts. Whether you came from California, Florida, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Hawaii, Alaska, you breathed in the same toxic air.

Last month, Congressman VITO FOSSELLA and I released a report showing that Americans from all 50 States were exposed to the aftermath of 9/11 and have serious concerns about their health.

This map shows how many people from each State enrolled in the World Trade Center Health Registry, which is a comprehensive health survey of those most heavily exposed to the toxins of Ground Zero. Those who enrolled answered a 30-minute telephone survey about where they were and what they did on 9/11, and they were asked to report the status of their health. This will allow health professionals to compare the health of those most exposed